

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.



## Ludwig Rocker II Power Plus Kit

Ludwig has upgraded its previous *Standard* line of kits to the new *Rocker II* drumkits. These kits have wooden shells, finished inside with a gray sealant. The lugs have a slightly different design than Ludwig's top "Classic" drums. Components of the *Rocker II Power Plus* are: 16x22 bass drum, 11 x 12 and 12 x 13 toms, 16 x 16 floor tom, and 6 1/2 X 14 snare. All drums are fitted with Remo *Ebony Ambassador* heads on top and bottom, except for the snare drum, which has Ludwig-made heads.

### Bass Drum

The 16 x 22 bass drum has 16 lugs with T-rods and claws. Metal hoops are used (a first for Ludwig), and these hoops have a plastic inlay, matching the drum's color. The *Rocker II* spurs disappear into the drumshell. Instead of being curved like the regular Ludwig spurs, these are merely straight steel rods, angled slightly forward in their brackets, and secured with a T-screw. The spur tips are convertible from rubber tip to spike point, by threading the rubber tip up the spur leg shaft. A felt strip is fitted behind the batter head. This bass drum has good power and fullness, partly due to its extra two inches in depth. The spurs hold the drum in place quite well.

### Mounting System

Ludwig's 771 L-arm tom-tom holder is mounted onto the bass drum. A single down post fits into a diamond-shaped base plate, and is secured with a T-screw. The base plate also provides for the post's memory lock to ensure accurate height in future setups. Each L-arm moves independently of the other and works on a ratchet. Ludwig has at last incorporated T-bolts at these angle ratchets but still uses hex nuts at the arm holders themselves, which means you still need a wrench to adjust the separate arm tilt and spread. This tom-tom holder has been around for quite a while. Simplistic as it is, it still works just fine, and has enough height to accommodate the deep-shell toms in this kit.

### Tom-Toms

The 11 x 12 and 12 x 13 toms have 12

lugs each, and no internal mufflers. For some reason, Ludwig has decided to go with imported metal hoops, rather than its American-made ones. Both toms have T-bolt-locked brackets for mounting onto the L-arm holder. The 16 x 16 floor tom has 16 lugs, plus three rather short legs that fit into T-screw/eyebolt brackets. It too has no internal muffler.

A bit of dampening is needed to ease the overtones on the drums, but all in all, the toms have good depth and tonal clarity with the *Ebony Ambassadors*. If you prefer a thicker sound, *Ebony Pinstripe* batters may help. (By the way, it should be mentioned that toms are available in 8", 10", 14", and 15" sizes, should you want to add onto your kit at some later date.)

### Snare Drum

The 6 1/2 x 14 snare has a wood shell with plastic covering. It has eight double-ended lugs, a knob-operated internal muffler, and 12-strand, plastic-end snares. Ludwig has chosen the popular *P-85* side-throw strainer for the drum. It's very efficient, with a minimum of adjustments. The drum is fitted with a coated Ludwig batter head and transparent snare-side head.

The drum is capable of a range of timbres from crisp to fat. The rimshot sound is a bit thin for my taste, but since sound is such a subjective matter, I suggest you try the drum yourself, if you can. Overall, this snare drum is just fine.

### Hardware

The *Rocker II* kits allow a choice of hardware packages: either the *Modular II* series or the lower-priced *Rocker* series. The kit tested came with *Modular II* hardware, so let's take a deeper look.

All stands in the *Modular II* line have double-braced tripod bases (not tubular), and nylon bushings set into their height joints. The cymbal stand has two height-adjustable tiers, while the boom cymbal stand has one adjustable tier, and a telescopic boom arm with length adjustment for the entire arm. Their tilters operate on concealed sprung ratchets. Both stands are very sturdy and have fabulous chrome

plating.

The *Modular II* bass drum pedal has a split footboard with an adjustable toe stop. A single, adjustable expansion spring is stretched upward from the frame's right side. Linkage is done with a semi-flexible synthetic strap. There are two sprung spurs at the base. A T-screw mounted off to the side of the pedal moves a small block along a track to either raise or lower the hoop clamp plate. This method is certainly a lot easier than having to get on your hands and knees in order to mount your pedal. The pedal has good action and is quite silent. I have no complaints with the design, which is tried-and-true among many different drum companies.

The snare stand relies on the common basket design with threaded shaft. The stand's angle is adjusted via a concealed ratchet gear. Its base folds up from the bottom, and like the other *Modular II* stands, the base itself has huge rubber feet. This stand holds the snare drum well, and by itself it is pretty impressive looking.

The *Modular II* hi-hat's footboard matches the bass drum pedal, and it too has sprung spur tips at its base. Two externally housed compression springs are used for tension. They are easily adjustable via rotary caps at the top of their tube housings. This stand uses parallel-pull and has a chain linkage. I really enjoyed playing this hi-hat because of its great feel and extremely smooth response.

Six different coverings are available for the *Rocker II* kits: black, white, red, blue, silver, and maroon. Each logo badge has a stamped serial number, and these badges are a bit different from the top-of-the-line ones, in that they are colored black-white-silver. I must also mention that Ludwig is the only company I know of that *still* includes sticks and brushes with its kits!

Ludwig's *Rocker II Power Plus* kit is an excellent outfit for the price. The drums are well-made, and the hardware is a killer. The kit as tested retails at \$1,190. With the lower-line *Rocker* hardware, retail is \$1,015.

